

On the notions and expectations of one stage of life, I suppose most reflecting men look back with a kind of compassionate contempt, though it may be often with a mingling wish that some of its enthusiasm of feeling could be recovered, I mean the period between childhood and maturity. They are prompted to exclaim, What fools we have been—while they recollect how sincerely they entertained and advanced the most ridiculous speculations on the interests of life, and the questions of truth; how regretfully astonished they were to find the mature sense of some of those around them so completely wrong; yet in other instances what veneration they felt for authorities for which they have since lost all their respect; what a fantastic importance they attached to some most trivial things ; * what complaints against their fate were uttered on account of disappointments which they have since recollected with gaiety or self-congratulation; what happiness of Elysium they expected from sources which would soon have failed to impart even common satisfaction; and how sure they were that the feelings and opinions then predominant would continue through life.

If a reflective aged man were to find at the bottom of an old chest, where it had lain forgotten fifty years, a record which he had written of himself when he was young, simply and vividly describing his whole heart and pursuits, and reciting verbatim many recent passages of the language sincerely uttered to his favourite companions; would he not read it with more wonder than almost any other writing could at his age excite ? His consciousness would be strangely confused in the attempt to verify his identity with such a being.*. He would feel the young man, thus introduced to him, separated by so wide a distance as to render all congenial communion impossible. At every sentence, he might repeat, Foolish youth ! I have no sympathy with your feelings, I can hold no converse with your understanding. Thus you see that in the course of a long life a man may be several moral persons, so dissimilar, that if

*I recollect a youth of some acquirements, who earnestly wished the time might one day arrive when his name should be adorned with the addition of D.D., which he deemed one of the sublimest of human distinctions.